

American Missionary Problems

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There are two possible methods of treatment, two avenues of approach to American missionary problems.

I. THE EXTENSIVE METHOD.

The problems may be treated topically, a general dispassionate survey of the field being conducted. This is the simplest and the easiest method of treatment. It requires an attitude of aloofness, and the treatment is therefore more or less academic. To gain the bird's-eye view the bird must be poised aloft, and aloof from the scene under view.

This treatment would bring out the following particulars:

1. *Immigration*.—Fifteen millions of alien people to be absorbed into our American life; until the European war broke out more than one million more coming each year. A universal city problem; scarcely less generally a rural problem; and, in many sections, more difficult even in the country than in the city. A large Eastern problem; 75 or 80% of the newcomers make their first settlement in the angle formed by a line from Minneapolis through Kansas City to Baltimore. Yet it is a startling Western problem, and relatively

greater there than anywhere else. In the seventeen large states of the Northwest and the far West 13% of the nation's population must absorb 18% of the newcomers.

2. *Negroes*.—Ten millions of them. While there is a constant stream of immigration from the South to Northern cities, yet the vast proportion of negroes still reside in the South. The relative increase in such cities as Washington, Philadelphia, New York and Newark is very great, but eight or nine of the ten million negroes are still in the South.

3. *The white mountaineers of the Central South*.—The inhabitants of the rugged territory extending from the Atlantic seaboard westward to Missouri. Five millions of pure-blood Americans, in many sections very backward in civilization, but a stock which, under proper training, has shown the finest traits of American character.

4. *The Spanish or Mexican-American of the Southwest*.—A few years ago there were scarcely more than four hundred thousand. It is now safely estimated that a million Spanish-speaking people are in Continental United States. Disturbances in Mexico have precipitated large emigration from that unhappy republic. The problem is overwhelming the spiritual forces in southern California; Texas is said to have four hundred thousand Mexicans.

5. *Indians*.—Three hundred and twenty-five thousand, and on the increase. A very complicated problem, requiring in some sections attempts at the immediate incorporation of this element into American life, and elsewhere compelling the Church to put missionaries in the field who will learn the native language. In the latter case it is estimated that the present and perhaps the next generation can be reached through the pagan vernacular alone.

6. *Mormonism*.—A pronounced political menace, perhaps even more serious than a moral. The Mormon hierarchy absolutely dominates the politics of one State, holds the balance of power in two others, and is rapidly increasing its industrial and political influence in seven others.

7. *The far-flung frontiers*.—They are to-day flung farther than ever. Irrigation and dry-farming systems are the magic by which "The Great American Desert" is to become "The Garden of the Lord." Rural regions west of the Missouri River are almost entirely neglected by the Church. Only towns have been reached with any effectiveness. The country church, familiar to the Eastern civilization, is almost unknown in the West. Individuals and families in certain sections grow to mature life having never heard a sermon or been otherwise touched by organized religious influences.

8. *Lumber and mining camps*.—The conventional church almost invariably perishes or re-

treats before a coal-mining population, though family life is generally maintained in such communities. More than a million souls are involved. In the lumber camps, where at least two or three hundred thousand men live without family ties, conventional church methods do not apply. A special kind of evangelism is necessary to meet spiritual needs.

9. *Alaska*.—Our last great frontier; a continent of itself. Five hundred and ninety thousand square miles of uncalculated and incalculable wealth just ready for exploitation. Government projects soon to open the gates to the inrush of a stable, self-sufficing population.

10. *The Islands*.—Cuba and Porto Rico furnishing a key to the difficult Latin-American problems; American civilization there on trial where its success or failure will vindicate or condemn the Monroe Doctrine; Hawaii and the Philippines presenting each its peculiar race problem of the most serious import.

11. *The City*.—Everywhere. The growth of cities is the outstanding phenomenon of our civilization. None of our methods of organization are keeping pace, neither those of the Church nor those of the civic order. Almost half the population is already urban, and the proportion is increasing astonishingly. This movement is inevitable and irresistible. We must make up our minds to the city as the dominant force in our life, and lay our

plans accordingly. Yet the Church is almost universally retreating before the city's worst and most characteristic development. It deliberately withdraws from the hard tasks in the city and seeks the easy places where its conventional methods apply with the least inconvenience. The all but universal trend of churches is up-town while the population is ever more closely packed in down-town.

12. *The Country*.—Everywhere also. Rural revival is the concern of the church and every other institution of society. One whole state, our most agricultural state, lost population during the last census decade. The large majority of rural counties in all the older states lost population. In some of the great agricultural Middle Western states 35% of the farms are already operated by tenants. The tenant is a poor citizen, taking little interest in the support of churches, schools or other social institutions. Thirty-five hundred of the 10,000 Northern Presbyterian churches stand with closed doors on a given Sunday for the lack of leaders and support. The Methodists and Baptists of the South declare that 16,000 of their churches in that section alone stand thus closed on a given Sunday. Yet all agree that the country church holds the key to the rural situation and must logically assume the leadership in an effective country life revival.

The above method of presenting home missions is cyclopedic. For that reason it is in

danger of sacrificing the spirit and enthusiasm which home missions should contribute to the missionary campaign. The very attitude of detachment may be destructive to vital home mission spirit. By this treatment home missions may become only a miniature of foreign missions, which is of larger territorial dimensions, and, in the final analysis, even more complicated. Home missions should make a distinct contribution. This can best be done by another method.

II. THE INTENSIVE METHOD.

There is another method of dealing with home missionary problems much more effective than the extensive method.

IMMEDIACY AND ATTACHMENT.

I. It involves the principle of immediacy and assumes the attitude of attachment. Home missions should be brought close home to find its deepest spring and cultivate its largest inspiration.

Home missions should impress each church with its immediate responsibility and cultivate a primal enthusiasm for the work within arms' reach. Thus each church should find its fulcrum for the wider outreach; discover here the *sine qua non* of effective world endeavor. For example,

Immigration is of the greatest concern. The appeal should not exhaust itself in declamation of figures drawn from the Immigration Com-

missioner's Report in Washington, nor lay the weight of its argument upon the vast and rapid additions to New York City's population. The immediate concern is the group of one hundred and fifty families which constitute the "Little Italy" of the city in which the given church is located; the colony of Slavs forming in another center; the Ghetto which is gradually encroaching upon the field of a conservative old church down-town in that very city. It will be nothing short of a revelation to many a layman to find that his small city has an immigration problem of its own. Our first and most important duty should be to quicken in such the sense of immediate responsibility.

The negro should not be treated as an academic question. The historian cannot meet to-day's issue. There should be the freest admission of mistakes and prejudice on either or both sides of the line in the past. But the past is past. The issue of the present should be made clear. The negro, especially in Southern communities, has spiritual needs which it is the obligation of the Church to meet. Forces and money outside of the community may help, but the real understanding of the problem and the real ministry which shall meet the problem must be locally generated and locally applied. The South must therefore be depended upon to carry the home mission burden of the negro. The sympathetic help of the North may be depended upon, and

all will pray for such wisdom as shall no longer justify criticism of ill-advised measures imposed upon local communities from outside of them and antagonistic to their sentiments, but the South must lead and assume the responsibility which it often criticizes others, who are less qualified, for assuming.

The city problem is much to the fore and should not be less intimately treated. New York is very valuable for illustration, but New York has no monopoly upon the city problem. "The American City" is not the problem of immediate concern, but the moral and spiritual conditions of this particular American city in which the appeal is presented. Each church in its attack upon the city problem is concerned, first of all, with its own city, with the capacity of the church to correct slum conditions prevailing upon A and B streets.

This first and primal home mission enthusiasm can in each case be shown only upon problems within immediate reach, and the home mission appeal should emphasize this fact supremely.

THE UNITY OF NATIONAL LIFE.

2. The same principle emphasizes the solidarity of national welfare. Each local condition articulates with and merges into a national; but, with the wider range, the attitude of attachment should never be lost. Home missions is to be interpreted as a national

issue. For the individual the community remains the fulcrum from which the national life is lifted. Thus patriotism becomes a more intelligible reality and a more vital force.

The American people are bound in one bundle. Both the economic and the spiritual prosperity of each community are indissolubly locked with that of every other. The bonds of communication, railways, telegraphs, telephones, the speeding of automobile and aeroplane serve the more effectively every year to bind all the people into one national life.

Thus the attitude of attachment is glorified, and home missions become as important and large as the destiny and mission of the nation.

AMERICA'S WORLD MISSION.

3. So the principle has a still wider application. There is a national world mission becoming ever more clear and pronounced. The national life furnishes the fulcrum for world evangelization. In this outreach the attitude of attachment should be fully preserved.

This opens the way for a genuine world ministry vitally different in method, and, in some elements, in its spirit, from foreign missions. It is not less altruistic in its enthusiasm but more scientifically democratic in method.

"The Man Without a Country" cannot, in a real sense, be a world citizen. The most potent influences we exert in shaping world des-

tiny are expressed in our national impacts upon the life of the world. These forces are already dominant, and are destined to increase. We make or mar our evangelical program by political, commercial and industrial contacts of our nation with the peoples of the earth.

This contrast in method with foreign missions should not be blurred. There is no necessity for conflict either in reality or in appearance. The two attitudes are radically different; some will naturally emphasize one, and some the other, just as some are temperamentally individualists and others' activity is always prompted by the social passion.

The distinction between home and foreign missions is therefore not one of territorial limitations. Home missions is not merely a local enterprise while foreign missions is a world mission. Rightly conceived, home missions is no less world-forming than foreign missions. They approach a common problem from a different attitude and with a different method. While the contrast both of attitude and method is pronounced, the end sought by all sincere spirits is finally the same.

It cannot be said that even the philosophy of this interpretation of home missions has been fully worked out. Advocates of home missions themselves often either do not accept it or do not comprehend it, and practise is even more backward. But the principle is

vital, and home mission speakers should clarify their own conception, and seek with insight and passion to set the idea clearly forth.

III. MONEY AND HOME MISSIONS

Two methods of treating the money question should be followed by home mission advocates.

I. Home mission agencies need cash to support their enterprise.

The local churches need support. The national boards of home missions need more money. Each agency is cramped in many of its activities. The appeal for money should be unequivocal.

The basis of the appeal should be kept clear. It is not one of stark need. Pointing out the moral and spiritual obliquities in our social order does not necessarily argue for church contributions. The rough-and-ready layman will discover a *non sequitur* in the argument, "The slums of our city are bad; therefore give money to the churches." Such argument will be effective only on condition that the churches are clearly understood to be putting in play forces to correct slum conditions. In other words, efficiency in home mission administration can be the only convincing argument in the appeal for money.

Any thoughtful student knows that the national boards are latterly showing marked increase in their efficiency. Every one of them

is so far ahead of its constituency in progressive measures as to be in danger of the forces of reaction. Every one of them is seeking even beyond the present determination of its constituency to correct the evils of over-churching and of wastefulness in duplicating religious agencies. The spirit of unity and efficiency is aflame in the national boards. The great need now is backing from the rank and file in the churches.

2. Another, and, in some respects, a more important attitude for home missions is that of demand for the consecration of American money for social and industrial justice. The Church is everywhere embarrassed by the charge of profiting financially from unjust economic conditions. Home missions is out to preach the spiritualization of the social and economic order; the establishment in society of the principles of brotherhood for which Jesus of Nazareth gave his life. The home mission appeal should, in every city, make searching and sympathetic inquiry into the Church's immediate responsibility for industrial conditions.

As intimated, this attitude should be deeply sympathetic. It is unjust invidiously to point out any individual and lay upon him the responsibility for our distorted industrial order. No individual can, single-handed, correct these conditions. Some will be compelled to labor under them during the remainder of

their lives, but every sincere churchman should be an open rebel against industrial injustice whether he be an exalted captain of industry or the humblest laborer in mill or factory. The solution of these problems can be gained only by the completest unity of desire and effort. The Church should suppress class antagonisms by bringing all men of every grade of society into fundamental Christian relations of brotherhood.

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